

Plumbing Advisory Board

July 21, 2022

Advisory Board Attendees: Ed Bigley, John Inks, Regis Claus, John Cummins, Ruthann Omer,
Jim Eichenlaub, David Green

Absent Advisory Board Members: John Moffit, William Price

ACHD staff Attendees: Drew Grese, Geoff Rabinowitz, Jason Willis, Kim Joyce, Shauna Morris, Todd Bogdanovich

Mr. Bigley called the meeting to order and requested votes to approve the minutes from February and June 2022.

Action: Ms. Omar motioned to approve the minutes from February and June 2022. Mr. Claus seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously by a 6-0 vote.

Mr. Grese updated the Advisory Board about the status of the changes to Article XV. The changes were presented to the Board of Health on July 15th. The Board of Health had no concerns and approved a public comment period lasting until August 11th. The Board of Health is expected to vote on final approval of the proposed changes on September 7th. The changes are on pace to be presented to Allegheny County Council for its approval before the end of the year. Mr. Grese stated that the 2015 code changes will be put on ACHD's website and the relevant changes will begin being enforced on August 1st. A contract with the ICC will be renewed to develop a book incorporating both the 2015 and 2018 changes. ACHD will develop an implementation program with the plumbing schools.

Mr. Grese informed the Advisory Board about ACHD's proposed virtual inspection policy. He stated that the proposed virtual inspections are limited in scope. He got the idea from attending a conference last year and noted that many other agencies nationwide have begun conducting some inspections virtually. ACHD's policy has not yet been finalized, however a pilot program was begun with two small contractors last week. ACHD hopes that virtual inspections will be a tool to help it overcome its manpower limitations. Ms. Omar asked if there were limitations on the sizes of projects that could be inspected virtually. Mr. Grese stated that there will be and gave examples of projects such as spot repairs and smaller than 1" in size. He stated that he conducted a few virtual inspections yesterday and noted that contractors loved the concept as it will save them time and money. Mr. Eichenlaub asked how ACHD will verify that the virtual inspection is being held at the correct location. Mr. Grese stated that the virtual inspection will begin by viewing the property from the street and showing the house number and the plumber's license number. Mr. Bigley suggested that Mr. Grese asked Minneapolis how they conduct their virtual inspections, as ACHD cant allow virtual inspections turn into the wild west.

Mr. Grese presented the Advisory Board with metrics measuring the program's performance, such as the number of inspections that were conducted and the number of plans that were filed. He stated that the program's biggest challenge is staffing. Open positions include an account clerk, a plans supervisor, a sprinkler supervisor, and five inspectors. Mr. Bigley stated that ACHD will never get people due to the wages offered, the pay gap between government service and private sector employment is too out of line. Mr. Grese stated that if that doesn't change, this program will fail. Mr. Bigley stated that the County Manager is aware of the problem. He suggested that a possible solution would be to pull the plumbing inspectors from the union with other trades and develop a new contract for the inspectors. Ms. Joyce stated that 7 out of 12 inspectors will be eligible for retirement within a year. Ms. Omar asked how much money would be necessary to attract applicants. Mr. Bigley stated that ACHD's wages should be competitive in comparison to the wages offered by the Airport Authority. He stated that he will meet with the County Manager and report back to the Advisory Board at its next meeting.

Mr. Willis informed the Advisory Board that he will be passing off his duties, regarding the Advisory Board, to Brendan Turley and Lizzie Rubenstein. Ms. Joyce stated that she will bring a proposal regarding terms to the Advisory Board's next meeting.

Mr. Bigley adjourned the meeting, Mr. Cummins seconded the adjournment.